Of Things Good & Right

Or, The Acquisition of the Principles For A Life As A Critical Civic Issues Investigator

by

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As Related to

David R. Wrone

How Losing a Putlizer Taught Me About Honesty & Dishonesty

Sixty years ago, or perhaps it was 50, when I was 20 and working for the morning paper in Wilmington I made it possible for a stranger to win that year's Pulitzer for local reporting. I should have figured in the award for unusual reasons and did not probably because of the dishonesty of the city editor of the sister evening paper.

I was not working because I'd cut all the fingers on my right hand badly and could not use it. A hurricane hit the east coast. There were no communications south of Wilmington. So, on my own I went to a fellow radio amateur, Howard Layton, W3AIS, a chiropodist, and asked him to see what he could raise that would make a story or stories. Before long he heard from the then most powerful Navy station, NAA, then in Arlington. He told me that we had both been given temporary Navy commissions, as lieutenants, and how to relay to them anything picked up that could be of interest. As best I can now recall, it was by phone to the Philadelphia navy yard.

Howard operated in code, known as "CW", and his was a more powerful rig than my low-powered phone station. Static from the storm was terrible. As he listened he raised his hand for me to be silent and then he started writing what he was getting in his ear-phones in code. I read it and for all the many long blank spaces representing what he did not get was excited. It was a graphic account of

the storm from the paper's Salisbury, MD, correspondent, who was in Berlin at the home of an amateur.

While it was on the time of the evening paper, as a loyal employee who was motivated by news interests I phoned and spoke to the city editor. Harris Samoniski was as though he had been cast in the role for Ben Hecht and Charlie McArthur's "Front Page." But it was affected by him. I told him what I had an and he put a steno on, or transferred me to one, and I read what there was of the story, ad-libbing for the copy Howard had not been able to pick up. I wrote a fair amount of that story, what I imagined it has said, as well as being the one who got it out. So, I was acutely disappointed that evening when I walked the three blocks of the office and saw it was not in the paper. I told some of the morning paper staff what had happened and they also were surprised.

When Howard pooped out I went from one amateur to another for three days, around the clock, working storm messages but not getting another story like that one.

It was not long before all of us learned what had kept the story from the paper. We learned when Somaniski was fired. That was because the story from our correspondent was in the Phila. Evening Bulletin, then a major paper.

Samoniski tried to sell the story to the Bulletin, I was told. And the Bulletin would not pay him because our correspondent was also the Bulletin's correspondent. His name was Puritt or Truitt.

When that story, partly mine, won the Pulitzer, the Pulitzer our paper could and should have had, the managing editor, Charlie Gray, was really angry. He wrote a story telling the truth. I should have kept it and didn't.

Many years later, probably 1960-1962, after Lil had won the national chicken cooking championship and I had been the national barbecue king, as it was called, we were at the festival, that year at Salisbury. As usual, I demonstrated barbecuing-with a marinade instead of a barbecue sauce, the recipe with which I'd won. One of those who interviewed me was the son of that Pulitzer correspondent. His father was then the manager of WBOC-TV, in Salisbury. I told him to tell his father if he wanted to know how he had won that Pulitzer I would be glad to tell him. He did not get in touch so I suppose he knew from the paper. And he did not see fit to say "thanks."

In retrospect I believe that without my then realizing it that was a valuable learning experience in both honesty and dishonesty.

A Cause Can Elicit Irresponsible Zeal
Or The Greater Akron Association Evil

Going back to my youth, when I was sent on my first investigations by the Senate Civil Liberties Committee, to Cleveland, it soon became apparent to me that the National Labor Relations Board regional director, Ralph Lind, who was also on the committee's staff, had made only the tiniest pretense of an investigation of the Burns Detective Agency. It took him less than a morning! I reported my suspicion and continued the assigned investigation, of a labor spy outfit with the name The Corporations Auxiliary Co. It was owned and operated by one J. H. Smith. He looked like everyone's grandfather, like Bernard Baruch as it happened. He was also on the Board of Trustees of Case University. Selling labor spies who made much trouble and got lots of men hurt. As I worked my way through his books I discovered that the Chrysler Corporation was among his clients. No long after that he offered me a fine life-time job with Chrysler. I did not accept it, although I was then being paid only the $30 a week of my job at the Agricultural Adjustment Administration which had loaned me to the committee. We later held a hearing exposing this patron of the arts, which Smith was and Chrysler.

From Cleveland I was sent to Akron. All I recall of what was assigned to me there was to serve a subpoena duces tecum on the President of Goodyear Tire, Paul Litchfield. I do remember two things from Akron. One was speaking to a reported, Bob Jackson, I thought off the record and he printed what I said, and the other was picking up the newest twist in anti-labor activities, so-called "citizens committees" which were not that at all but were propaganda fronts for the largest corporations. That one called itself the Greater Akron Association. Among other things it got anti-labor columns and articles published locally. They were distributed by the National Association of Manufacturers and by other trade associations. I also got into the American Iron and Steel Institute with what I did.

That was to walk into the GAA's office and show my credentials to the man who ran it, Edgar A. Browse. I told him I'd like to examine his records. He was indigent as hell!

"Why that is the Russian system," he protested.

I asked him if he would prefer the American system, for me to hand him a duces tecum subpoena, which would require him to transport all his files to Washington. He soon saw that he preferred what he had referred to as the Russian system. So, I went over his files in a hurry, segregating what I wanted copied, and on his word that he would have them typed, with carbon copies, xeroxing being far into the future, left.

I remember that it was on a Friday that I was recalled to Washington, with the clear understanding that I was in disgrace. I wasn't told why, just to get the hell back. I'd been working with the rubber-workers union. Its President, Sherman Dalrymple, had the message for me. He decided to have his general counsel, Garnet Patterson, accompany me. We took the sleeper but spent much of the night just talking.

One early Saturday morning I took a cab to where I'd lived with three unmarried friends to get some fresh clothing, I discovered they had moved! So, I returned to my Senate office with what I had and prepared to face the music.

Fortunately there was a fine elderly Mormon who had had much to do with the creating of the committee, Heber Blankenhorn, of the NLRB, who found me first. He took us walking in the Senate Office Building, then only one, and asked me to tell him all I knew about what could have me in the trouble in which I was. I did, he told me to sit tight, and he saved my job for me.

I knew I had investigated the Greater Akron Association without authorization but I also knew how important that was to the committee's assigned responsibilities and that with its limited appropriation it would not be able to send another investigator there. What I'd done led to one of our most important hearings, a thorough expose of anti-labor corporate "public relations" that was utterly ruinous to those communities. Unless you have a notion of how terrible working conditions were and how low the wage scale this will not be easy to comprehend. The situation was so very bad it led to the sit-down strikes, a new method.

The firm that was most active in that field was the today most famous Hill & Knowlton.

What I'd said of Lind and Bob Jackson a story were also probably factors.

About a year later Lind and Patterson both wound up working openly for trade associations or manufacturers groups. No, Lind was a specialist in negotiating contracts with as little for labor as possible.

What I had done with the GAA was irresponsible, as I later realized and as I should have realized then. All I though of was doing what was expected of me. Which is close to what the Commission's lawyers did, what they believed was expected of them.

But I had made possible the ending of that wretched means of social and economic repression that was also very bad for the country, which required not only that people live better but that they have the means of making business profitable by being able to consume more.

The Weak Survive By Fighting Back
The Dies Committee

Skipping my departure from the committee toward the end of 1939, which was much of an unusual learning experience for me, to when I was working on a book on the pre-McCarthy Dies Un-American committee, mostly anti-Semitic and anti-Catholic, and the committee through an associate who was legislative representative of Labor's Non-Partisan League, arm of the United Mine Workers, entrapped us. Reacting instinctively I learned what I've never forgotten: the weak survive the strong only by not defending - by attacking, by fighting back. In the end - and on the chance I've not told you that full story, will add it later - I did what had never been done before (and I do not know of it being done since), I got the Dies agent indicted on two felony counts. Dies had to engineer a plea for him, two years, suspended for a guilty plea. And of all the improbable things, Dies and his vice chairman, Joe Starnes of Alabama, thereafter first-named me and even put their arms around me (Starnes, not Dies) when they saw me in the Capitol. And the prosecutor was so impressed by what I had done and by what had happened to me that he gave me the volume of grand jury testimony that includes Dies'! He said I might at some point in the future need it. After that was no longer illegal, I gave it to Hood.

This was a fine experience when I was fired in a program in the State Department into which my OSS component was transferred when Truman ended the OSS. We were fired under what it had been

necessary we would have challenged as unconstitutional a McCarran Rider. But the lawyers I got us, pro bono, Arnold Fortas and Porter, got us rehired with a public apology and we then resigned. We were the first to beat a "loyalty" rap and we were about as famous as any of the later ones were. All the others have one, a case of mistaken identity, were fine scholars, all Ph.D.'s. Two were anthropologists, proteges of Margaret Mead. My job was to do for the Ph.D.'s what they could not do for themselves, what was practical and is not taught in college.) I don't know if I've given you any account of this so when I can I'll return to it.

Don't Overlook the Obvious

X-2

In OSS I became a trouble-shooter as the result of the first job waiting for me when my security was cleared. It was considered to be impossible. All sorts of supposedly impossible chores were bounced to me by various components, including counter-intelligence. The easiest was from Counter-Intelligence, then known as X2, for the White House. They'd all missed the obvious. Recall my references in Never Again! to The Purloined Letter? People do miss the obvious just by overlooking it.

General William "Wild Bill" Donovan, a prominent New York lawyer and an authentic GOP reactionary, later an early cold warrior, felt strongly the traditional responsibility of the commander to those under him. Four soldiers detailed to OSS who had volunteered for what had a high probability of being a fatal parachute drop into France, had gotten into a fight with the Washington military police. They did a bit of damage to the MPs, too. They had been convicted and had exhausted their appeals. But Donovan felt that they were not guilty. His fine lawyers had failed and the mean were serving time. I do not now recall who the lawyers on that case were but among the latter famous OSS lawyers were Arthur Goldberg, later a Supreme Court Justice, and the Donovan, no relative, who negotiated the release of the Bay of Pigs Prisoners and of others like Francis Gary Powers of the shot-down U-2 flight that ended the Paris summit and promising detente. So Donovan assigned the effort to do something to my catchall division, Presentation. We did such things as make presentations to introduce the new, to make the complicated comprehensible, etc. There was also a psychological aspect to out work on

some of the more unusual jobs we got. Mine was unusual in that the fine lawyers had failed and the case was legally closed.

We had all sorts of really talented people. Most were like the many successful Hollywood writers and then prominent artists. Eiro Saarinen the architect who later designed Dulles Airport and the vehicles used there was one in that half of the shop. Another artist was the Austrian refugee Henry Koerner. He was later a successful artist. I recall many TIME covers he did. He was also given the difficult job of trying to get the gung ho! pilots of military planes to use an electronic gismo that could save their lives. They liked to be by-the-seat-of-the-pants pilots and as a result many lost their lives when if they had used the new equipment, IFF, for Identification, Friend or Foe, they would not have. So, with all others having failed, we got the job of doping out how to get the pilots to use IFF.

It was given to Henry. He came up with a brilliant and as it turned out quite successful means of getting the pilots to think of and then to use IFF to save their lives and their planes.

It was a large painting, of a USO show before a full canvas of GIs some with their tongues hanging out. In the foreground of the painting and a large part of it was the view from backstages of a woman dancing for the GIs, in the nude. What a back side Henry gave her! So, her nakedness and the panting audience was an attention-grabber. Henry superimposed "IFF-The Equipment is Good-USE IT!"

It was duplicated by the thousands and the army and the navy placed prints in all the latrines used by the pilots. (What was later the Air Force was then the Army Air Corps). It got the pilots' attention, they needed it, and the losses decreased rapidly and greatly.

That was not an atypical assignment and although mine was, in a real sense it was not because we got those jobs where others had failed.

How was I going to do what those lawyers had not been able to do? Not from knowledge of the law, which I did not have. Nor could I expect to dig up what the investigators had not. So, I decided that other than getting a feel for the bar in which the fight had taken place, Dave Touhey's, in Cabin John, just over the District line in Maryland, along the Potomac, and of the path taken there by our men from the holding area, the Congressional Country Club, a bit to the west, perhaps the

northwest, I decided that the only shot I had was in what existed. So, I went to OSS headquarters, in an old brick school house since demolished and then condemned, and returned with every piece of paper that existed on what was known internally as "the Paris case," after the Sergeant Paris in charge of that detail.

Six weeks later, which means six weeks after the Army detailed me to the OSS, the Paris crew was freed from Fort Tilden, New York, where they were serving their time. What a rep that gave me at OSS HQ!

What I did was to go over the existing records looking for what I found, what the overly-rushed layers had not detected in them.

What I put together from the existing record was a solid case of the MPs precipitating that fight because they resented the greater freedom GIs in the OSS had. Like not having to be in full uniform. Like wearing white rather than military-color sox, and other than GI shoes, including moccasins.

Our boys had been framed by the former Boston cop, the MP lieutenant also named Donovan. And not long after our boys were freed Donovan was a suicide.

This was my approach in Whitewash. I used the official evidence to prove that the conclusions based on it were wrong and knowingly wrong.

What I had done almost got Whitewash published. The prejudice of the woman who ran McKay--her husband, name Rawson, owned that publishing house--killed it.

When I walked in I asked the receptionist if I might speak to the managing editor. She asked my name, I gave it, and I heard a voice sing out, "Send him in!" When I entered his compartmented space Howard Cady introduced himself and asked, Are you the Weisberg of the Paris case?" I said I am and how did he know about that-it was secret?

"I was in headquarters then," replied. We chatted about those days a bit, I left the ms., he read it and liked it, recommended that they publish it, and Mrs. Rawson nixed it.

(Perhaps the most unusual part of the non-publishing history of Whitewash is in that in more than 100 rejections internationally there was not a single adverse editorial comment.)

That X-2 job for the White House was one on which, although I completed it in very short order, I forgot about The Purpoined Letter.

Our government had taken over about a dozen ships owned by a Scandinavian, perhaps a Dane, as used by the Nasiz. The owner was demanding that the matter not having been litigated the ships be returned or that he be paid of them. The decision having reached the White House, people there wanted to know the facts. And nobody could produce them. When it went to X-2 and it could do nothing someone there phoned me the morning of the first of the two days that remained for response. I should have thought immediately of files in which I had worked but for some reason did not. After thinking for a while I phoned a lawyer in DJ who had been on the committee staff briefly. He gave me the name of a woman in DJ to ask. I phoned her and she told me of the files on such matters in space the government had rented from a bank in downtown Washington, third floor of that bank's building. I took a cab there, then 20 cents plus a nickel tip, found what I wanted rapidly, took a cab back, another quarter, turned my reporter in, and the whole thing took a half-day or less.

The woman, I think an economist, who had told me what I should I have known I treated to a lunch to thank her, the only time we ever met.

She was later charged with giving information to a Russian with whom she was having and affair. Her name was Judy Coplon. She married one of her defense council whose name I do not recall. She was acquitted, or perhaps it is that the case was thrown out on appeal and never re-filed, over the violation of her rights of some nature I do not now recall. Last I heard of her she was a Brooklyn housewife.

When All Is Lost Attack
The Dies Committee Attempts to Destroy Me

Going back to the Dies business, what enabled me to win was my approach, going after them--and Lil as Mata Hari.

I had worked much in the public statements required to be filed under several laws, political filings, and of Congressional expenses. Thus from my work in the available records under the Corrupt

Practises Act I told John Spivack where he could get those records on the fascist, anti-semitic radio preacher, Catholic, Coughlin. That led to his book, "At the Shrine of the Silver Dollar." Although of the left, what Jack put together helped for Ce official hands. My friend Sol, then in DJ, has personal knowledge. The Catholic hierarchy was told that if it did not restrain him he would be charged with felonies. They reined him in and knowing the alternative, he cut all that Nazi propaganda out and give up his very popular Sunday night radio show. So, when the Dies gang came after me, the first thing I thought of was going over their payroll records because I believed, as it turned out correctly, that the man who did the entrapping was in their pay. Through a friend I got three housewives to move into the offices of the clear of the House of Representatives, the name Shanks, and they typed everything the Dies gang turned in. Took them three weeks. When I went over those records I found, sure enough, that the man they used, David Dubois Mayne, Washington representative of the native fascist Silver Shirts, was in their pay with the payment masked as witness fees-on days when there was no testimony.

You have all of those records that the Hollywood Ten did not take. They did not return anything they took, alas, the research for that book.

Mayne had been fed to my associated, Gardner Jackson of LNPL, by Drew Pearson. The man who did it a former Interior Department investigator, John Henshaw, had been a Person legman.

Jackson's friends would have nothing to do with representing us as our lawyers. Including the firm of his friend, Dean Acheson. (Jackson introduced me to both Acheson and Justice Frankfurter as we three left the firm's offices together one night. Frankfurter picked Acheson up. Jackson had been the information officer of the Sacco-Vanzetti committee when Frankfurter was its chief lawyer.) Ultimately Pearson provided his counsel, the Bill Roberts law firm. Its prestigious international law expert, Edgar Turlington, was the lawyer assigned. Dies is international law? But we had a lawyer.

Dies et al wanted us prosecuted. To make that possible they had a law passed and we were to have been charged ex poste facto. Jackson's many DJ friends were telling him not to worry, that we'd not be indicted. I did not trust them. And to make our indictment more likely, the Southerners held up the confirmation of the then United States Attorney, Dave Pine, as a federal judge. (Pine knew me. I

helped him in a case. Before I testified he nicknamed me "Affidavit Face.") I knew the pressure was on, as Jackson, much more experienced, should have recognized.

One day when I'd driven to Wilmington to visit my mother, Lil phoned and told me to return immediately. I did and she had been a real Mata Hari!

It turned out that she had dated a lawyer named Dennis Holloway before we met. He was Mayne's lawyer. He recognized immediately that I was being framed. He phoned Lil and invited her in. After they chatted for awhile he told her to make herself comfortable, that he had something to do that would take about a quarter of an hour, and then he'd return and they could chat some more. He moved some papers ostentatiously. Lil got the hint, read them, and told me that the plan was to get Jackson and me indicated, regardless of what his administration friends told him. I believed her, not Jackson's friends.

I have no recollection of how many times I was before the grand jury but I do know that I was not content with defending myself. I kept attacking the Dies gang and with the records of their payments to Mayne to which I could always return, I took the grant jury, of government employees, away from the assistant United States Attorney, John Fihelly. He was later Japanese war crimes prosecutor. They refused to indict Jackson and me and indicted the Dies agent for uttering and forging and for obtaining money under false pretense. The first was solid- a false affidavit. The second had to do with Mayne's borrowing for me a small sum he did not return. I think that was weak and represents the determination to do all the grand jury could.

Dies was forced not only to negotiate a plea for Mayne-he had to appear in open court as a character witness- for the Washington representative of that native fascist outfit.

After it was all over and things had quieted down Fihelly phoned me and asked me to see him. He then handed me the grand jury transcripts he said I might at some future time need. They were in the same envelop when I gave them to Hood.

The night of the day the grand jury refused to indict Jackson and me and did indict the Dies agent a number of Members of Congress threw me a party at the Madrillon, then a fine downtown restaurant. These Members and perhaps one or two others were at a dinner party at Jackson's when

Jackson gave them what I had gotten from Mayne. I had questioned him before a court stenographer but in my home and he had certified to the authenticity of each paper he gave me. He then signed an affidavit saying the same thing. So, the Members were not afraid of what I'd gotten from Mayne but I was, the reason I had him attest to genuineness under oath. One, Frank Hook, a Democrat from Michigan's Upper Peninsula, insisted on my writing a speech for him to deliver on the Floor of the House. I didn't want to but had no real choice. At that Madrillon party Hook sang two songs to me, from popular songs of day. One was "The Dies (Eyes) of Texas Are Upon You" and the other was "Starnes" Fell on Alabama."

So I learned that the philosophy of the French World War I general, was it Foch at the Marne? was correct. Reportedly he said, "My center has crumbled, my left is in retreat, my right has been turned- good, I attack!"

I remembered that when the right wing nuts who took State Security over decided to get rid of me and of others. They first tried a reduction-in-force notice on me. I went to Civil Service and that was nullified. I was a veteran, with veteran's preference. Then they fired us all under the McCarran Rider. McCarran was a Nevada Senator and a native fascist. Under the rider the agencies included, among them State, did not have to give notice or a hearing or even have any reasons at all. They could just fire and not be accountable.

Of the ten, four were in the Latin American Division, me one of the four. With some effort I got them to fight with me. I then got us counsel, the firm of Arnold, Fortas, and Porter, I'd known Arnold and Porter. I have no knowledge of whether any of the others had charges or hearings but I had neither. What our lawyers arranged was even a page-one defense of us in the old New York Herald-Tribune. They did a job that had State in an autenable position and they ten negotiated the deal in which we were rehired with an apology and then resigned.

I believe that also was without precedent. We were the first major "security" case, before McCarthy.

I then went back to reporting, as the news and special-evens editor of Washington's then only good music station, the second in the country, WQXR in New York being the first. It then was

managed by the friend who had been Click's editor when I did those Nazi cartel exposes while its Washington correspondent. He remembered then when I was sent to OSS by the personnel office of the Military District of Washington. That was what got the Paris case assigned to and waiting for me at OSS.

I left the station and started to become a farmer when the Dies gang started asking questions about me. They could have forced the loss of the station's license.

The call from the friend who is to counsel Lil on her shopping is die about now so I'll knock off and be ready.

These are some of things that came t mind when I recalled that I'd not told you that Whitewash was a runner-up in the mystery-story competition. I may have told you of some of them. But as I was thinking this early morning I realized that these represent some of the real-life experiences, what is not and cannot be taught, on which I have drawn in my assassinations work and writing.

And in my FOIA lawsuits, when I also attacked all the time, usually despite Lesar's reluctance.

Once was when I insisted on including the demand for a temporary restraining order in demand for getting the FBI's records without charge. Jim insisted that I did not have a legal leg to sand on. I knew that. But I finally did get him to demand this TRO so I could have the records to respond to press inquires and be that I be able to prevent the FBI from turning the release into a media event, into propaganda. The demand for free copies was unprecedented enough. But as I told Jim, that redemand that made a man-bites-dog story of it and would get attention, which it did, and it gave the judge something to deny so he could appear to be fairly balanced when he found for me on the free copies. As Gerhard Gesell did. Forcefully.

While denying the TRO Gesell did order the FBI to get the records to me as fast as it could. I had them the second day!

Illegally.

There were about 14 large cartoons, as I now recall. The route mailman could not get them in his auto, of course. The postmaster, who I knew well, finally decided to break the law and put them on the flatbed truck they had for hauling trash to the dump and they were delivered that way.